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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine the types of stresses experienced by professionals. Subjects were 56 persons enrolled in graduate classes who completed the Tennessee Stress Scale-L, Work Related Stress Inventory for Professionals. Besides the Total stress score, the instrument produced three subscale scores: Stress Producers, Coping Mechanisms, and Stress Symptoms. The results revealed that: (1) married subjects had significantly higher scores than did single subjects on the Coping Mechanisms subscale; (2) the staff group had significantly higher scores than did mid-level managers on Stress Symptoms and Total Stress; (3) the moderate stress level group had significantly higher scores than the mild stress level group on Stress Producers, Stress Symptoms, and Total Stress; (4) subjects having pets had significantly higher scores than subjects without pets on Coping Mechanisms; (5) men who had pets and women who did not have pets had significantly higher scores than did men who did not have pets and women who had pets on Stress Symptoms and Total Stress; and (6) individuals who had both children and pets and those who had neither children nor pets had significantly higher scores on Stress Producers than did individuals having either only children or only pets. (NB)

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TYPES OF STRESSES EXPERIENCED BY PROFESSIONALS

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TYPES OF STRESSES EXPERIENCED BY PROFESSIONALS

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the types of stresses experienced by professionals. Fifty-six subjects responded to a survey questionnaire on stress. Besides the Total stress score, the instrument produced three subscale scores: Stress Producers, Coping Mechanisms, and Stress Symptoms. Results showed significant differences between: (a) married and single subjects on Coping Mechanisms scores, (b) staff and mid-level management groups on Stress Symptoms and Total scores, (c) mild and moderate stress level groups on Stress Producers, Stress Symptoms and Total scores, and (d) subjects who had pets and those who did not on Stress Symptoms and Total scores. Also significant differences were found among (a) men and women who had pets and those who did not on Stress Symptoms and Total scores and (b) groups who did and did not have pets and/or children on Stress Producers scores.

TYPES OF STRESSES EXPERIENCED BY PROFESSIONALS

INTRODUCTION

Selye (1976, p. 74) defined stress as a "non-specific response of the body to any demand made on it." He identified two types of stress: distress and eustress. Distress is a type that is harmful to the body. Eustress is pleasant and beneficial to the body. Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome theory assisted in a better understanding of environmental stress. As a result, a number of studies (Selye, 1983, Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Eysenck, 1983; Roseman, et al., 1982; Forbes, 1979) have been conducted on the role of stress producers and the ways individuals handle stressful situations. Recently, Schnorr and McWilliams (1987, 1988) reported more specifically on stresses in administrative and professional roles. These researchers analyzed responses for 800 subjects to a work-related stress questionnaire. Significant differences were reported (a) between genders on Stress Producers and Stress Symptoms subscales, (b) among regional differences, with western region reporting lower scores than the eastern region, and (c) among various professions on several demographic variables including gender and geographical regions. The purpose of the present study was to identify the type of stresses experienced by professionals in the southwestern region of the country.

METHOD

Fifty-six subjects enrolled in graduate classes at a

mid-western state university responded to a survey questionnaire on stress. Of this group, 18 (32.1 percent) were men and 38 (67.9 percent) were women. Their ages ranged from 21 to 50 with the average being 38 years. In this group, there were 23 (41 percent) single and 33 (59 percent) married individuals. Forty (71 percent) of them had children and 16 (29 percent) did not. Thirty-three (59 percent) had pets and 23 (41 percent) did not. In describing their jobs, 34 (61 percent) indicated they were staff, 14 (25 percent) were mid-level managers, 4 (7 percent) were executives, and 4 (7 percent) did not describe their jobs. These subjects classified their occupations as follows. Two (4 percent) were in Business, 34 (61 percent) were in Education, 2 (4 percent) were in Government Services, 8 (14 percent) were in Health Services, 8 (14 percent) reported as Other (mainly full-time graduate students) and 2 (3 percent) did not report their occupation. Subjects rated their perception of stress level. In this group, 10 (18 percent) subjects rated themselves as having mild, 38 (68 percent) as moderate, 3 (5 percent) as severe stress levels, and 5 (9 percent) did not report their stress level.

The Tennessee Stress Scale-L, (TSS-L), Work Related Stress Inventory for Professionals (McWilliams & Schnorr, 1986) was the instrument used to collect the data. This is a 60-item questionnaire used to obtain measures of stress from people on a job. Responses to each item in the questionnaire are reported on a Likert-type scale in which 1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = occassionally, 4 = often, and 5 = most of the time. This

inventory is scored by summating the scores for each item. The total score ranged from 60 to 300. A score of 60 indicates a minimum level and a score of 300 indicates a maximum level of stress. The total score is the summation of three subscales: (a) Stress Producers, (b) Coping Mechanisms, and (c) Stress Symptoms. Each subscale has 20 items. Subjects were given the questionnaire and asked to return it as soon as possible. Using the demographic data, *t*-tests and two-way analyses of variance were used to analyze the scores for the three subscales and total of the TSS-L.

RESULTS

T-tests showed significant differences between a number of groups on various scores. Married subjects reported significantly (t =1.95, $p < .03$) higher scores than single subjects on Coping Mechanisms subscale. (See Table 1). On job descriptions, between staff and mid-level management groups (the executive group was excluded from this analysis since there were only four subjects), results showed significant differences on Stress Symptoms (t =2.39, $p < .04$) subscale and Total Stress (t = 1.78, $p < .04$) scale. (See Table 2). In each case, the staff group reported higher scores than the mid-level managers. Between mild and moderate stress level groups (severe stress level group was excluded since there were only three subjects) significant differences were found on Stress Producers (t = 3.28, $p < .001$) and Stress Symptoms (t = 1.84, $p < .04$) subscales and on Total Stress (t = 1.97, $p < .03$) scales. (See Table 3).

In each case, the moderate stress level group reported higher scores than the mild stress level group. A significant difference (t = 1.78, p <.04) was found on Coping Mechanisms subscale between the group of subjects who reported having pets and the group who reported not having pets. (See Table 4). Subjects having pets reported higher scores on Coping Mechanisms subscale than subjects not having pets.

Results from the analysis of variance showed significant differences in the interactions among some groups. Among men and women who had pets and who did not have pets, significant differences were found on Stress Symptoms subscale, $F(1,52)$ = 10.12, p <.003, and Total Stress scale, $F(1,52)$ = 8.54, p < .005. (See Table 5). In each case, the highest scores were reported by (a) men who had pets and (b) women who did not have pets. On Stress Producers, a significant difference, $F(1,52)$ = 3.86, p < .05, was found among the group of subjects who had pets or did not have pets and groups who had children or did not have children. (See Table 6). The highest scores on Stress Producers were reported by (a) the group who did not have pets or children and (b) the group who had pets and children. In the latter case, it may be a question of how many pets and children they had.

CONCLUSION

Results of the present study showed some findings concurring with those reported by Schnorr and McWilliams (1987, 1988). Other findings in the present study focused on specific

demographic comparisons. Married individuals, when compared to single individuals, reported coping with more stressful situations. Staff personal, when compared to mid-level managers, reported more stress symptoms and over all stressful situations. Could it be that the staff members did not have the opportunity to make decisions about changes and promotions in their jobs. Individuals who described themselves as having moderate stress level, when compared to those describing themselves as having mild stress levels, reported having more stress producers and overall stress.

Individuals having pets, as compared to individuals not having pets, reported having to cope with more stressful situations. Men who had pets and women who did not have pets reported more stress symptoms and overall stress than did men without pets and women with pets. Could it be that men perceived that taking care of pets was an extra task; whereas, women feel having pets is a form of affiliation. Two groups, individuals who had children and pets and individuals who did not have pets or children, reported high stress producers. It may be that having either pets or children would be less stressful. Or, is it a question of how many pets and how many children they had. Further analyses of these data should be made. In addition, other studies should be conducted with a much larger number of subjects would enable one to make other types of analyses.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations and *t*-test for Single and Married Individuals on Coping Mechanism Scores

Individuals	N	M	SD	t-test
Single	23	49.39	8.14	1.947*
Married	33	53.82	8.52	

$p < .03$

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations and *t*-tests for Individuals Who Described Their Jobs as Staff and Mid-Level Administrators on Stress Symptoms and Total Stress Scores

Scores	Group	N	M	SD	t-test
Stress Symptoms	Staff	34	47.00	13.66	-2.389*
	Mid-Level Administrators	14	37.43	9.47	
Total Stress	Staff	34	153.71	23.83	-1.781*
	Mid-Level Administrators	14	140.86	19.61	

*$p < .04$

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations and *t*-tests for Individuals Who Indicated Their Stress Levels as Mild or Moderate on Stress Producers, Stress Symptoms, and Total Stress Scores

Scores	Stress Level	N	*M*	*SD*	*t*-test
Stress Producers	Mild	10	45.10	8.95	3.276*
	Moderate	38	54.68	8.05	
Stress Symptoms	Mild	10	37.40	9.94	1.838*
	Moderate	38	45.89	13.64	
Total Stress	Mild	10	135.80	21.62	1.966*
	Moderate	38	152.08	23.68	

*$p < .04$

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations and *t*-test for Individuals Having Pets and Those Not Having Pets on Coping Mechanism Scores

Individuals	N	*M*	*SD*	*t*-test
Having Pets	33	53.67	8.32	-1.775*
Not Having Pets	23	49.61	8.55	

*$p < .04$

Table 5

Means, Standard Deviations and Interaction *F*-ratios for Men and Women Having Pets and Those Not Having Pets on Stress Symptoms and Total Stress Scores

Scores	Group	N	*M*	*SD*	*F*-ratio
Stress Symptoms	Men & pets	7	51.00	16.21	10.12*
	Men & no pets	11	36.45	8.73	
	Women & pets	26	41.42	11.16	
	Women & no pets	12	50.00	14.46	
Total Stress	Men & pets	7	163.14	22.48	8.52*
	Men & no pets	11	131.55	25.58	
	Women & pets	26	145.38	22.73	
	Women & no pets	12	156.08	25.95	

*$p < .005$

Table 6

Means, Standard Deviations and Interaction *F*-ratio for Individuals Having Pets and Those Not Having Pets and Individuals Having Children and Those Not Having Children on Stress Producers Scores

Group	N	*M*	*SD*	*F*-ratio
With pets and children	25	53.80	7.70	3.86*
With pets and no children	8	47.75	12.91	
No pets and with children	15	50.07	12.07	
No pets and no children	8	55.88	9.80	

*$p < .05$